

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7375
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 06795

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PINT, JO
SUBJECT: NEW CABINET APPOINTMENTS

1. SUMMARY: IN MINOR JORDANIAN CABINET RE-SHUFFLE, HIKMAT AS-SAKET APPOINTED MINAGRICULTURE, SA'ID AT-TAL APPOINTED MINCOMMUNICATIONS AND ABD AR-RAOUF AR-RAWABDEH MOVED FROM MINCOMMUNICATIONS TO MINHEALTH. THE TWO NEW ADDITIONS, NEITHER OF WHOM ARE SPECIALISTS IN THE AREA OF THEIR APPOINTMENTS, ARE HARD LINE EAST BANK NATIONALISTS AND ARE KNOWN AS SUPPORTERS OF PM BADRAN. END SUMMARY.

2. TWO NEW MINISTERS WERE APPOINTED AUGUST 19 TO FILL OUT JORDAN'S 18-MAN CABINET. IN WHAT LOCAL PRESS DUBS "MINOR SHUFFLE", MINCOMMUNICATIONS AND ACTING MINHEALTH ABD AR-RAOUF AR-RAWABDEH BECAME MINISTER OF HEALTH. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION DIRECTOR HIKMAT AS-SAKET WAS SWORN IN AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, AND JORDAN UNIVER-
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SITY'S DEAN OF FACULTY OF EDUCATION SA'ID AT-TAL TOOK OVER FROM RAWABDEH AS MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS.

3. HIKMAT AS-SAKET WAS BORN IN SALT ABOUT 60 YEARS AGO INTO THE PROMINENT EAST BANK SAKET FAMILY. HE OBTAINED A BS IN MATH AND SCIENCE AT DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY AND HAS SPENT HIS CAREER AS A CIVIL SERVANT. IN 1975 HE WAS

APPOINTED UNDERSECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND IN APRIL 1978 HE WAS NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, REPLACING MRAIWID AT-TAL. HE IS CONSIDERED STUBBORN AND TACITURN AND ESCHEWS SOCIAL GATHERINGS. SINCE HE HAS NO KNOWN INTEREST OR EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF AGRICULTURE, OUR CONTACTS ASSUME HE WAS APPOINTED BECAUSE OF EAST BANK CREDENTIALS.

4. SA'ID AT-TAL WAS BORN IN IRBID IN 1934 AND IS THE BROTHER OF THE LATE PRIME MINISTER WASFI AT-TAL AND FORMER CIVIL SERVICE DIRECTOR MRAIWID AT-TAL. SA'ID RECEIVED A BA IN MATHEMATICS AT CAIRO UNIVERSITY AND AN MA AND PHD IN EDUCATION AT THE UN. OF PITTSBURGH. HE BEGAN HIS CAREER WRITING TEXTBOOKS IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AND SERVED ONE TOUR ABROAD AS CULTURAL ATTACHE. HE WAS APPOINTED TO JORDAN UNIVERSITY'S FACULTY OF EDUCATION WHEN THE UNIVERSITY FIRST OPENED AND IN 1973 WAS PROMOTED TO DEAN OF THE FACULTY. HE IS A WELL KNOWN "EAST BANK-FIRSTER" WHO IS EXPECTED TO HAVE A BRIGHT POLITICAL FUTURE. HE IS RESPECTED AS A WRITER AND HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING A PRINCIPLED ADVOCATE OF FREE SPEECH.

5. COMMENT: THE TWO NEW MINISTERS, NEITHER OF WHOM ARE SPECIALISTS IN THEIR NEW FIELDS, ARE EAST BANKERS WHO ARE KNOWN SUPPORTERS OF PM BADRAN. THUS WE ASSUME THOSE CREDENTIALS WERE DETERMINING FACTORS IN APPOINTMENTS.
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SAKET'S APPOINTMENT AS MINAGRICULTURE COMES NOT ONLY AS SURPRISE TO US BUT ALSO TO OUR CONTACTS IN FIELD OF AGRICULTURE. CHOICE OF EAST BANKERS MAY HAVE BEEN MADE BY KING PARTLY IN ORDER TO SOOTH EAST BANKERS WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY OPPOSED FURTHER INVOLVEMENT WITH WEST BANK. NEW APPOINTMENTS WERE NO DOUBT MADE TO FILL VACANT JOBS TEMPORARILY UNTIL A MAJOR CABINET CHANGE IS APPROPRIATE, PARTICULARLY IF SUBSEQUENT EVENTS WERE TO ALLOW JORDAN TO JOIN NEGOTIATIONS. IN ANY CASE, CONVINCING EAST BANK-FIRSTERS OF DESIRABILITY AND NECESSITY OF JORDAN'S RE-ENGAGEMENT IN WEST BANK AFFAIRS WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE TO INVOLVE CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL MANEUVERING BY KING.SUDDARTH

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